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MORPHOLOGICAL AND MOLECULAR CHARACTERIZATION OF A NEW SPECIES OF ATLANTIC STALKED BARNACLE (SCALPELLIFORMES: POLLICIPEDIDAE) FROM THE CAPE VERDE ISLANDS

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Abstract

The taxonomy of pedunculate cirripedes belonging to the genus *Pollicipes* has essentially remained unchanged since Charles Darwin described them in his exhaustive work on the Cirripedia. This genus includes three species of stalked barnacles: *Pollicipes pollicipes* in the north-eastern Atlantic, *P. polymerus* in the north-eastern Pacific and *P. elegans* in the central-eastern Pacific. However, a population genetics analysis of *P. pollicipes* suggested the presence of a putative cryptic species collected from the Cape Verde Islands in the central-eastern Atlantic. This study examines the morphology of these genetically divergent specimens and compares them with that of representative Atlantic samples of the biogeographically closely related *P. pollicipes* and with the poorly described *P. elegans*. Molecular data, including mitochondrial COX1 and nuclear ribosomal interspaces sequences, were obtained for all species of the genus *Pollicipes*. Morphological distinctiveness, diagnostic characters, congruent divergence level and monophyletic clustering, at both nuclear and mitochondrial loci support the taxonomic status of this new species, *Pollicipes darwini*.